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Georgia RI1

[For a short history of Georgia in the context of the history of the Caucasus as a whole, see 5; Allen, RH1 Caucasia, category 116, pp, 169-176, 191-227.]

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[For detailed information on the history of Georgia from earliest times to the period of the Russian conquest see, category 116, entire source--Analyst]

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sians imposed such an onerous tax on cattle and trees that, five years later, the army of Nadir Shah was beset by famine. But the Persian exactions continued, until in 1747 the King of Karthalinia effected a kind of general strike by withdrawing all the working population into the hills and strong places. Lastly, in consequence of the wars, the people were frequently subjected to a special tax, enduring over a period of years, the proceeds of which were spent in the repair of churches and castles and in the redemption of slaves.

In two respects the Church in Georgia bears an important relation to the political history of the country. Firstly, Christianity, both in Zoroastrian and Mussulman days, represented the influence of Byzantium and the West as opposed to that of Persia and the East. And the prosperity and power of the Church fluctuated according to the respective strength of Christendom and Islam. Secondly, Georgia did not experience the struggle between Church and State which was taking place in other parts of Christendom. This fact must be attributed directly to the menace of Islam. The influence of the Church with the peasantry was too valuable to the King, and the armed protection of the King was too important to the Church, to allow of either of them attempting to weaken or dispense with the other. The revival of the Georgian monarchy saw the reappearance of a Catholicos at Mtzkhet, and the rich endowment of churches and monasteries. While Henry II in England was wrangling with Thomas à Becket, the Georgian Kings were showering favours and privileges on their clergy. The Catholicos and his bishops held wide lands and owned great numbers of slaves; many nobles were the vassals of Mtzkhet. Besides this, the clergy were free from all taxation, being liable only to contribute in a national emergency.

During the great days of the Bagratid monarchy the Church flourished and grew rich, under the protection of and in alliance with the Crown. But rarely do we note traces of that friction between the two dominant bodies in the State which was disturbing the politics of Western Christendom. The Catholicos, indeed, was recognised virtually as the equal of the King, and his feudal levies were commanded by an independent General, nominated by himself.

The two powers seem to have been interdependent; the King nominated a new Catholicos; the Catholicos presided over the Assembly of lords and bishops at the coronation of a new King. Together the King and the Church monopolised the greater part of the wealth of the country. Hundreds of

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churches and monasteries sprang up, constructed at great cost by architects, stonemasons and woodcarvers imported from Byzantium. The churches were full of gorgeous vestments, of rare illuminated holy books, of miraculous relics presented by noble devotees returned from the Holy Land, of costly gold and silver vessels. At the boards of the Catholicos and of his bishops holy men and their lay guests feasted to their full on the first fruits of the land. And the Church was chosen by the cadets of the aristocracy as a career more lucrative and more pleasing than service at the Court, or in the trains of the great *didebuls*.

With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom split, the Church split too. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by, or conferred as rewards upon, the relatives of the different ruling princes. The aristocracy, demoralised by the humiliating political conditions which often compelled them to embrace Islam, and forced them to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the Mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harîms, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness, and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating, with admirable impartiality, the feast-days of both.

Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this for the most part took the form of national feeling against the Persians. For the rest, the peasants clung to a number of superstitions dignified with the name of Christianity. But the churches were in ruins and for the most part unfrequented. Chardin has something cynical to say about their condition: "Les Géorgiens . . . ont une coûtume assez étrange de bâtir la plupart des églises sur le haut des montagnes. . . . On les voit et on les salue en cet éloignement, de trois ou quatre lieues; mais on n'y va jamais; et l'on peut bien assurer que la plupart

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ne s'ouvrent pas une fois en dix ans. Je n'ai jamais pu découvrir le motif de cette extravagance. . . . Je crois, pour moi, qu'ils les édifient en des lieux inaccessibles pour éviter de les orner et de les entretenir."

In their buildings the Georgians closely followed the architectural principles of the Byzantines and the Persians. The ruins of three very fine early examples (Ouplos, Darbasse and Vardzia)[1] still exist, and in the seventeenth century we have accounts of some great palaces built precisely like those of Persia. The houses of the lesser gentry were rough, two-storied, timber barns, roofed with clay or wooden tiles, frequently burnt down during the incessant civil wars, and easily rebuilt. The large living-room usually accommodated a number of domestic animals. "Les maisons," to quote Chardin, "sont fort incommodes et fort sales; elles n'ont ni cheminées ni fenêtres, le feu s'y fait au milieu, le jour y entre par la porte." The peasants lived more miserably still. Their huts were for the most part troglodytic, and all that was to be seen of them by a traveller riding past were the rough roofings of timber and earth, on which vegetables were flourishing and where the women lazed in the evening. A distinctive feature of Georgian houses of the better class were wide balconies, running the length of the building and furnished with divans, where the master and his guests would eat and drink and lounge away the afternoon and, during the hot season, sleep. Castles, consisting of a keep or donjon, surrounded by stables and other buildings, the whole protected by a wall and ditch, were scattered about the country, and formed the strongholds and treasuries, but infrequently the residences, of the princes. They afforded a refuge to the countryside in time of war.

The towns of Georgia were insignificant, wretched collections of mud-and-timber houses, built so close together that "il est souvent plus facile de cheminer sur les toits que par les rues." Tiflis, the stronghold of Persian political influence, and hence the centre of Transcaucasian politics, alone might claim to be a city. As the chief market-town of the Kur Valley, it brought farmers and merchants from all over the Caucasus, to buy and sell wine and silk and wool and cotton, horses and cattle and arms, while its famous mineral springs attracted wealthy invalids from Tabriz and Isfahan. Its bazaars and caravanserais, "bâtis de pierres et bien entretenus," were always crowded and busy—"on y voit autant de sortes d'étrangers

[1] Situated respectively near Gori, Kutais and Akhaltsikh.

6; Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Svan

771 Consequently, if successful in hunting, the Svan considers it his
776 duty to bring, first of all, a thank-offering to the deity—the protector of game—in order to appease him and secure his help in the future.[12] The Svans usually bring their sacrifices to highly situated places. To insure the success of individuals as well as the prosperity of the country as a whole, the Svan generally subscribes to the protection of the local deity. In spite of such opinions, the Svans have a notion of the Christian Trinity, although obscure. They were converted to Christianity, as were the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushes, in the historic past, and therein may lie the historical explanation of the fall and degeneration of Christianity in Svanetia as well as elsewhere in the Georgian High-
● [775] lands. Historical records clearly demonstrate that the Svans and their land formed a part of the Georgian kingdom.[13] It is known that from the time of Queen Tamar's father the Georgian chronicles divided the whole of Georgia into seven parts according to the seven territories inhabited by the Georgian nation; and in the formation of these seven provinces, Svanetia was included.

Besides their political affiliation, the Svans had other ties with Georgia in their religious life. The great number of ruined and ancient churches, containing numerous preserved manuscripts, icons, crosses, etc., proves that efforts were made by the kings of Georgia to spread and strengthen the Christian faith in
[346] Svanetia. The number of churches there is very large; they are found even in the most insignificant villages; in some there are as many as five or six.[14] They are especially numerous in Free Svanetia, many half-dilapidated and ruined churches and sacred places where, according to tradition, churches once stood. In Ushkul, for example, there are twenty such ruins.

795 Examining the old Georgian ordinances, called *gujaras*, we find that the Georgian clergy exercised a great influence upon Svanetia, where it appears Christianity was at that time solidly established. The church of Svanetia stood under the rule of the Abkhazian,

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[12] The details concerning this subject are brought out in the chapter on Contract and Group Solidarity.
[13] Bakradze: a, 29.
[14] *Ibid.*, 34.

21: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1952 R1 Soviet Union
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ments of history, philosophy and literature of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, have been found guilty of bourgeois nationalism and deviations and criticized accordingly by the Armenian Communist Party leadership.[20]

Thus there is ample evidence that the Armenians have been unable to accept the double-faced role which the Soviet Government has tried to assign to them. The Soviet régime, indeed, expected that the Armenians would be Armenian nationalists in their relations with the Turks and Persians, but, at the same time, good communists and Soviet patriots inside the Soviet boundaries. Whilst fulfilling the first part of the ideological assignment, the Armenians have remained largely nationalists inside the Soviet Union as well.

The Armenians feel the isolation which the communist régime imposed on the peoples of the U.S.S.R. much more than most other nationalities in view of their great traditions, the large number of their intellectuals and the extensive contacts which they used to keep up with the world at large. The repatriates who came to Soviet Armenia after the Second World War, were bound to find it particularly difficult to accept the totalitarian order ruling in the homeland of their race. Many of them had come from democratic or at least comparatively democratic surroundings. These repatriates have learned by their own experience that Russia offers to the Armenians security in a purely physical sense, but not the possibility of a genuine spiritual and national survival.

II. GEORGIANS

Not only are the Georgians neighbours of the Armenians but their history and area of settlement are so much intertwined with those of the Armenians that it is often impossible to say where Georgian history begins and Armenian history ends. It would be wrong, however, to conclude from this that the historic destiny of the two peoples was in any way identical. The Georgians, though they had suffered a great deal, did not bear the cross of a 'chosen people' – they led nominally an independent religious existence but had no special dogmas of their own such as brought about the isolation of the Armenian Church from the rest of the Christian world.

'GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN BROTHERHOOD'

Georgia was less exposed to foreign invaders than Armenia partly because the Armenians frequently played the part of the shield which protected the Georgians. Although Georgians and Armenians often became simultaneously victims of aggression, there were other cases when Armenians were subjugated, but Georgians spared. The precarious role of a small Christian people which, for geographical reasons, was at

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the mercy of Moslem powers soon suggested to the Georgians the path of seeking an alliance with Russia. The desire for such an alliance was expressed for the first time as early as 1587 when a Georgian prince, Alexander of Kakhetia, asked the son of Ivan the Terrible, Fyodor, to accept the overlordship of the whole of Georgia. Subsequently, attempts of Georgian princes to get the Russian Czars interested in their country never ceased. Deputations of the Georgian principalities were repeatedly going to Moscow to ask for Russian assistance against Persia. However divided on other issues the Georgian principalities – Kakhetia, Kartli, Mingrelia, etc. – always showed a considerable degree of unity in their positive attitude towards Russia.

S.U. 175 563 Ge. 175

Peter the Great was the first Russian ruler to conclude a formal alliance with a Georgian king, namely with Wachtang VI, ruler of Kakhetia, Eastern Georgia, for his time a very progressive personality, author of law books and founder of the first printing works in Tiflis. The Peter-Wachtang alliance is part of the history of the first Russo-Persian War of 1722–25, an undeclared war in which Peter occupied Persian provinces without ever breaking off diplomatic relations with Persia. After some initial successes the Persian expedition had to be discontinued, partly because Georgian assistance proved to be less effective than Peter had hoped for. Wachtang, and many other Georgians, who had compromised themselves for Russia's cause were offered sanctuary in Moscow. These Georgian exiles and their descendents, as individuals, played a distinguished part in Russian history by embracing military and diplomatic careers. At the same time they continued to contribute to the development of Georgian national culture and published books in their mother-tongue.

The actual establishment of Russian overlordship over Georgia was also due to the initiative of the Georgians themselves. Georgia became a Russian protectorate in 1783 by a treaty concluded between Catherine II and the King of Kakhetia, Irakli II. The Georgian King who let the Russians enter his realm and sign the death-warrant of the independent Georgian State, was by no means a weak or degenerate ruler who betrayed his country for personal advantages. He was one of the ablest kings Georgia had ever had. In signing the treaty he was guided by a deep understanding of Georgian history and acted under no external compulsion whatsoever. Since he was not only a gifted statesman, but also a brilliant military commander, he succeeded in making the end of Georgian independence not a source of humiliation and grief for the generations to come, but a matter of heroism and glory which inspired a great many of the writers and poets which Georgia had brought forth in the course of the nineteenth century. The treaty with Irakli paved the way for the manifesto of September 12th, 1801, about the incorporation of Eastern Georgia into the Russian Empire which Czar Alexander I

signed only after some hesitation. This manifesto marked the actual beginning of a determined Russian Transcaucasian policy. S.U. 175 563 Ge. 175

A large number of Russian revolutionaries came to Georgia immediately after its annexation and spread their influence among the Georgian intelligentsia. Quite a number of these aristocratic Russian revolutionaries, who later participated in the December rising of 1825, served on the staff headquarters of the Caucasian Army Corps under General Yermolov, the uncrowned king of Georgia between 1816 and 1827. Recent Soviet historical writers have emphasized Yermolov's progressive trend of thought and have given him credit for many positive things achieved in Georgia under his proconsulate. Thus the first Georgian newspaper was published in Tiflis under Yermolov in 1819, S.U. [204] which was the more remarkable since there existed then but three provincial newspapers in the whole of the Russian Empire, namely in Kharkov, Kazan and Astrakhan.[21]

All these historical facts constitute the basis of that concept of Georgian-Russian brotherhood which contributed to the formation of the political personality of Stalin perhaps as much as Marxist-Leninist theory. The encouragement which Stalin, the Georgian, gave to Russian nationalism, the demonstrative tribute which he paid to the Great Russian nation can only be understood if the Russian-Georgian associations in the past are taken into account. From the point of view of Stalin and of the Soviet régime, the historic Russian-Georgian brotherhood offers an excellent argument for the thesis that the Georgians ought willingly to accept dependence on Moscow.

That, however, is not the conclusion which Georgian nationalists might wish to draw from Georgian history. Without denying that Christian Russia played the role of Georgia's protector against such mighty oriental powers as Persia and the Ottoman Empire, they might consider that this protection has come to an end. Indeed, no powerful Shah or Sultan is likely to threaten the Georgian State in future, or try to Islamize it. Nor can gratitude for the beneficial effects of Russian culture on Georgia during the nineteenth century in any way interfere with Georgia's political orientation in the twentieth century. Georgian nationalists can only too easily make the point that classical Georgian literature borrowed a great deal from Persian literature, without the Georgians having ever felt any debt of gratitude towards Persia for that reason. Ge. 186 618

For the Georgian nationalists who tried to build up an independent Georgian State after the Russian October Revolution, neither Istanbul nor Teheran was the real danger, but communist Moscow.

[21] [Cf. cat. 116, pp. 223-225, R1 Soviet Union R1: Kolarz--Analyst]